

H I N T S

FOR

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Improving the Kingdom

OF

IRELAND,

IN A

L E T T E R

TO HIS EXCELLENCY, GEORGE LORD VIS-
COUNT TOWNSHEND, LORD LIEUTENANT
OF IRELAND.

BY A LOVER OF HIS COUNTRY.

D U B L I N:

Printed by CHARLES INGHAM, in *Skinner-Row*.
M,DCC,LXXI.

P

07-2626

May it please your Excellency,

THE great and substantial benefits this kingdom has received from your Excellency's administration, leave no room to doubt, that any design to promote it's welfare, can want a patron. Whether the few observations I have made on the present condition of this country, and the most effectual means to improve it, have any claim to originality, I shall not say; but sure I am, introducing them to the public, under the sanction of your Excellency's name, cannot fail of producing the most salutary effects. It is a truth as reproachful to us, as singular in itself, that *Ireland*, with the advantages of a free constitution, an excellent soil, and a tolerable population, is notwithstanding, the most uncultivated part of the British empire, or perhaps of all Europe. Your Excellency, no doubt, has observed in the several progresses you have made through this kingdom, that it is not, upon the whole, with respect to cultivation, much better than *Hounslow-Heath*, or any other waste in *Great-Britain*: a deplorable truth this, and not easily accounted for, considering it's dependence on, and proximity to that kingdom, which has attained a degree of excellence in husbandry and the arts related to it, equalled by no other people. The difference between the English, on the other side the Atlantic, and their brethren here, is very striking, and one of those political phœnomenons, that are apt to excite curiosity, as well as indignation.

The former carried with them the style and manner of their country, and left them to their children, an inheritance more precious, than the immense country they occupy; here, on the contrary, the smallest traces of an English descent, of an English manner are scarce perceptible, a paradox the solution of which I shall attempt, a solution that will point to a remedy.

It hath been observed, that all the arts, as well those that respect use as ornament, are linked as it were, by a chain, from whence a common relation arises; hence it is, that reasons drawn from one, often apply to another. *Du Pile* a French painter speaking of the clear obscure, says, it was not known to the Roman school before *Caravaggio's* time, and *though it might be found in some of their painters, yet 'tis not to be esteemed, as any thing more, than an happy effect of chance, or genius, and not as proceeding from an established principle of art.* This Frenchman's observation is singularly apposite to us: a diligent observer, and indeed he must be an attentive one, may now and then perceive a faint glimmering of something like a design to improve and inclose this Kingdom, yet that design not being founded on a system, its end not being clearly established, or perhaps understood, the means applied have ever proved inadequate. How long the first conquerors retained their manners and civility, I shall not enquire; *Mr. Spencer* says, that in his time, the English pale, from the nearness of the State, had preserved itself in reasonable civility: however that might have been, I think it is evident, that to all the purposes of rural œconomy, at least, we are as downright Irishry, as in the days of the greatest barbarity. One unacquainted with the internal condition of *Ireland*, would scarce believe, that there is not a farmer in the kingdom that has a waggon or a cart, but

but one horse cars of a preposterous construction the wheels not three feet high, and, to make them still more inconvenient, quite solid; their horses likewise, to be consistent throughout, are the forriest animals upon earth. A fat one is never used in works of husbandry, nor does the kingdom afford a public waggon, so that this article of land-carriage, is unhappily within the literal meaning of the description I have alluded to. Our husbandry is scarce better: the patriarchal occupation, as Sir *William Petty* calls it, of feeding cattle, shuts the door against every sort of encrease of industry. The known distinction and proportion between arable and pasture, are hardly thought on: the legislature has drawn a line, of one to twenty, in favour of tillage, an inconsiderable sacrifice to the œconomical deities, yet small as it is, I fear it is not offered. Indeed I don't wonder at it, our ignorance and bad management in this great source of national wealth, is deplorable: the seasons of the year are so unmarked with us, that we sow, when others begin to weed. I have come very lately from one extremity of the kingdom, the south, to the capital, and I found but four corn fields in blade, in more than an hundred miles, the 11th of *November*, and in the most forward counties, *Kildare* and *Dublin*, a great deal unsown. It is hard to ascertain the loss this practice is to us, because few sow early enough to establish the difference: but from the practice of *England*, which teaches us not to sow at all at this season, one may infer, it is greatly against us. The antients were very sensible of this inconvenience, and recommended early sowing; when the earth, as *Pliny* says, is as it were in rut. The course my own husbandry happens to be in, will enable me to speak with more precision on this article, before the end of next year. It is easy to conceive, that every other thing that relates to this business, is equally preposterous, their

fences are only temporary, last during the crop, and a new expence is incurred every year. When a field ceases to be in tillage, as is the common practice, no care is taken to lay it down with grass seeds, it returns to its pristine barrenness, having performed a painful penance, a naked and cold stubble, a mortifying length of time. Flax-husbandry has so many allurements, that one would imagine it would have provoked even Irish sloth. It is scarce known out of the province of *Ulster*. In thirty two, the entire procedure of Flax-husbandry, and the management of Flax from the field to the loom, were exposed in a series of accurate and ingenious essays, published by the Dublin Society. One would expect the lights afforded by that respectable body: the encouragement given by the legislature, would have effected this great national purpose. No such thing, immense herds of *Bullocks*, occupy a great extent of country, which should employ and maintain numbers of our fellow creatures usefully and beneficially to themselves and the state. In the essays alluded to, the deep clayey lands of the county *Limerick* are recommended for the culture of Flax. There is an infinite quantity of the same kind of soil in different parts of the kingdom, an almost continued vein out from the south of the county *Limerick* to *Kildare*, all this extent of country, if I distinguish rightly, would bear Flax: the number of hands this culture would employ should alone give it a preference; grazing is an enemy to population. I dare say, there is not a county in *Ireland*, from this single reason, more thinly inhabited than *Limerick*, but there is another consideration that recommends a change of staple, the immense profit upon Flax. In the composition I have alluded to, an acre of Flax is made worth £25, a profitable crop surely, it would be under-rating the produce of the county of *Limerick*, if I should say, that introducing Flax husbandry

dry all over it, would yield a clear profit of £10 an acre, a prodigious encrease! The number of acres in that county is, 375,320, consequently the produce at £10 an acre would be £3,753,200, very near equal to the rental of half the kingdom. Here is a precious mine indeed, the opening of which, seems to have been reserved for your Excellency's administration.

FROM what has been said, the condition of the labouring poor may be easily conceived: their misery is the necessary consequence of a wretched husbandry: in raiment, food, and housing, they are, in a word, the most miserable people upon earth, and if Providence had not bestowed that bread-like root, as some one calls potatoes, they would be still more miserable. Nor is this poverty confined to the labouring poor, the yeomanry are not much better. It is beyond a doubt, that the farmers in England, make three rents; nay the very ingenious Mr. *Young*, from the best information, makes it a great deal more. Here on the contrary, I am confident they do not make a shilling more than the head rent, and a miserable existence, no better in any respect than the labouring poor. And all this poverty arising, solely arising from ignorance and prejudice; for the farmers in Ireland are, this instant, in possession of equal advantages with that order in England: our markets are every bit as good, nay better, considering the price of labour, which is greatly in favour of the Irish husbandman. The medium price of wheat, at Bear-key the 5th of last *November* was £2 a quarter, about thirteen pence farthing a stone, and in Dublin it was then fourteen pence. A load of hay in London was then £2 : 5 : 6, here £1 : 17, no great difference in a load of straw, there 16 shillings, here 18, and the same proportion I dare swear holds in every other article of produce. Surely this evident loss of national income, is an object of national im-

port, a consideration that must justify me for the liberty I take, in submitting it to your Excellency's consideration! Sunk as we are in torpid negligence, we have sat down composed with dirt and poverty, murmuring against England, for not changing the laws of relation, and the order of things, to gratify our laziness; sources of wealth we have in abundance without recurring to the springs, which her wisdom hath thought proper to direct, within herself only, a man might as well murmur against Providence for not giving him wings, as an Irishman complain of some restrictions in trade. Our situation has necessarily circumscribed us within certain limits: it would be the greatest imprudence in us, a limb only, to draw that nourishment to ourselves which the body requires. Better, far better adopt her policy; run into those branches of industry which don't interfere with hers; her genial hand would support, direct, cherish and improve our warmest wishes.

I SHALL not fatigue your Excellency with a tedious enumeration of all our errors and absurdities; from the outline which I have drawn the residue is easily imagined; our misery, our ignorance and mismanagement call for an immediate remedy, this much and long-abused country looks up to your Excellency for one. I shall with the modesty that becomes me, point to one, happy if my feeble endeavours should merit your Excellency's approbation, or promote in any degree the good of this country.

IN my outset I glanced at the cause of all our evils, or rather what appeared to me in that light. There is undoubtedly great weight in authority, and no authority is more respectable than legislative; but to err is human, and therefore the caution of sound philosophy is well founded, that makes reason and argument the sole arbiters of opinion. Convinced of the propriety of this doctrine, I shall I hope be justified

tified in venturing to assert, that the legislature of this country has all along been in an error with respect to its condition, and that this error is one great cause of all our miseries. We have taken all our laws from *Great Britain*, and applied them with a precision that could only be effectual where conditions are similar. It is absurd to say, that infancy and maturity should have the same regimen: England was in the days of *Henry the 2d*, in a state of maturity that we have not yet reached; an old kingdom possessed of every advantage then known to mankind, a kingdom that, at most, required but improvement and not creation. Here on the contrary, creation and not improvement, was the task the first settlers had before them: they could be considered in no other light than as a colony, occupying a fertile, uninclosed, uncultivated country. Had the true spirit of Colonization been taken up and pursued with British spirit, it would be unnecessary to form a design to plant and inclose the antient kingdom of Ireland, towards the end of the eighteenth century. The modest idea of a colony, would have advanced civility and improvement much faster, than the pragmatistical notion of an old kingdom, forward in all the arts that support and adorn mankind. This has not been done, Ireland is still unplanted, uninclosed, and till those objects are effected, we must reconcile ourselves to our present misery, with the sense of being able to treble at least our income, if our indolence or prejudices would give us leave. This sage and prudent policy was adopted by queen *Elizabeth*: In her reign we find that grants were made of lands in several counties in this kingdom to undertakers, *who built walled towns, made several improvements and inclosures, introduced tradesmen and manufacturers of British birth, to the enriching, as the statute that rehearses those facts, says, and civilizing of the said several counties and territories, the joy and contentment of her royal majesty and all her good men.* Had those
 planta-

plantations, (for they were called plantation lands, conformable to the true spirit of colonization) been continued, Ireland would at this day wear another face, and an inclosed farm would not be as great a novelty as it is, they have not, nay the idea seems to have been forgotten, with what prejudice to the well being of this kingdom, the endless furzy coat that decks its surface, does but too well evince; before I come to the conclusion, which I would infer from all that has been said on this subject, I cannot help observing, that there is a sort of prejudice in the world, that * manufactures are more beneficial to a state

* SINCE I have written the observation to which this note refers, some late publications have come to my hands, which I had not seen before, from which it seems to appear, that the weight of public opinion is greatly inclined to agriculture, extremes on such questions are of great and perhaps dangerous import, whether the author of the farmers letters be right in asserting that the generality of manufacturers are a prejudice to the state, till the cultivation of the intire kingdom is complete, in the *circumstance* of not being employed about the *most important concern of it*, I should not, as I am at present advised, venture to say, that great object may be compleated upon much easier means, neither would it employ the generality of our manufacturers, though it were carried to the greatest extent, it would admit employment, it is very well known creates labour, and increases the industry of individuals, when this extensive cultivation is promoted, it may be attained without lessening the number of our manufacturers, whose labour is so beneficial to the state, and a near and constant market for the produce of the soil.

AND here I cannot help observing, that considerations of this nature can never be too much attended, had the Dublin society pursued, this year, it's wonted sagacity, premiums for the encouragement of agriculture would not have been neglected, for any other consideration whatever. Though the author of the farmers letters, carries his doctrine too far, yet surely it is clear, that when circumstances

a state than agriculture, I would not by any means foment jealousies between different branches of industry, that grow out of one body, and can have but one interest, but surely it is worth considering, what portion of industry is most beneficial to the state. Sir *William Petty*, a very respectable and too-much neglected authority, has decided this question against agriculture, according to his graduation of industry, manufacture is more beneficial than husbandry, and merchandize than manufacture; but his own principles, will, if I mistake not, evince, that the preference he gives manufactures is ill founded by him, a few people possessing a small territory, may be equivalent in wealth and strength, to a far greater people and territory; now putting the consideration of territory out of the question, for it can have but little influence here, the application of his own principles to the present state of England will prove the contrary; the number of people employed in husbandry, is made by the ingenious Mr. *Young* two millions eight hundred thousand, in manufactures three millions, the produce of their respective labours compared stands thus, by Mr. *Young's* computation, husbandry £83,237,691 Manufactures £27,000,000. A difference of almost three to one in favour of agriculture, and now that I have strayed so far from my original design, your Excellency will permit me to bestow a minute on a subject which does not immediately

stances are so very unfortunate as not to permit encouragement to both, agriculture in it's present wretched condition deserves the preference; if a very careless observer may venture to speak on a subject that requires more attentive regard, manufactures and the polite arts, have reached a degree of excellence in this kingdom, that does like agriculture discredit an English descent, is not this the strongest reason in the world to induce us to bestow all our attention, upon this neglected, untoward, unreclaimed child.

ately concern this Country, any more than as a part of the British Empire. It was a favourite subject of a late near relation of your Excellency's, whose opinion on questions of this nature is of the greatest authority, the world justly acknowledged that he was the greatest of his time, that our trade from the natural decay of every thing human, from other causes which I need not repeat, required fresh springs to supply those parts which time or accident had exhausted; this doctrine is certainly just, and evinces the propriety and expediency of extending our agriculture as well as our commerce. Our agriculture is certainly very respectable, but it is not carried to the extent it would admit of. Mr. *Young* whom I have had occasion to mention so often, recommends several improvements, but even those, were we in possession of them, are short of that greatness of just design which becomes a great and free people. Sir William Petty with the good sense that marked the last age, has said that the Hollanders by a judicious husbandry, make their lands pay them seven pounds an acre, ours on the contrary according to the last and highest calculation, Mr. *Young*'s, yield only fifty shillings, short by a great and shameful distance of the Dutch, whose lands Sir *Richard Weston* values higher than Sir *William*, for he estimates them at £10 an acre, I don't for my part see any impracticability in raising the produce of the soil of all England to that value, an income of £320,000,000. It is amazing we have not arrived at this standard before, regard being had to our weight industry and importance. The Dutch grew in one century to the great wealth we have seen, Sir *William Petty* says they were before a poor and oppressed people, living in a country naturally cold and unpleasant, we on the contrary have been in possession of every thing we could wish for the purposes of improvement for more than centuries, not to have made as rapid a progress as the Dutch did in the period alluded to, is a reproach to

us, if others exceed us it is a shame for us to lag behind, had our trade been extended as it ought, it would have turned part of our present husbandry out of doors, and the entire kingdom would be as Sir *William Petty* says of Holland, *improved by building houses, ships, engines, dykes, Wharfs, gardens of pleasure, extraordinary flowers, fruits, and only the most lucrative crops in husbandry, rape, madder, flax,* and this would undoubtedly be the consequence of extraordinary wealth arising from an extensive commerce and a superior husbandry. This digression has led me farther than I intended, I shall with more brevity and the greatest deference, lay before your Excellency the means which now appear to me the most likely to effectuate the improvement of this kingdom. From what has been said it appears that our tillage is insignificant and unproductive, that our pastures are unprofitable, the first is owing to want of encouragement, which is the source of our ignorance, the other to the want of inclosures: our legislature has not been inattentive to a corn trade, that truly laudable mode of encouragement by bounties adopted by the British legislature has been pursued by ours; one would expect the same success in both kingdoms, the contrary however has obtained, though the remedy has been enlarged from time to time, and the reason as I take it is very clear, the bounty has always been under the market, at least it is the case now, and therefore since our markets are as high as the English there is the strongest reason in the world to go at once as far as the British legislature has done; 5 shillings eleven pence a quarter when wheat does not exceed 52 shillings a quarter, is very near what is given by the 1st *William and Mary*. Bounties on the exportation of corn, let them be ever so considerable, stand in the most favourable light, they are premiums given to industry, encourage-

couragements to trade, bounties even to seamen. £20,000, a year employed in this service would indeed be a bounty to this kingdom, there is another object of encouragement equally useful, and nearly related to the former that is not beneath the notice of parliament, the proportion between arable and pasture; in England Mr. *Young* found it half and half, with an uniformity that he did not expect, an encouragement for observing the same proportion here would not I am sure defeat the views of the legislature: to this I must add, a judicious course of crops which might be tacked to the former, and made a farther qualification towards obtaining the encouragement to be given by the legislature; the expence those objects would incur could not be considerable, the bounty on corn exported into England by an old account I have by me, has been £72,433, 12s. 7d $\frac{1}{2}$, in latter years I dare say it has been more, but sure I am, the third part of that sum expended in the same service here, would make us a flourishing people; the Flax husbandry is so excessively profitable, that premiums distributed with a sparing but discerning hand, in aid of the bounty already granted by Parliament, would promote it effectually, in the several counties in this kingdom that abound with rich clayey soils: the extraordinary income we should acquire from this source of wealth so peculiarly our own, I have already shewn. I now come to the last measure which I shall have the honour of submitting to your Excellencies consideration; It has been said already, that the entire kingdom is unclosed, and scarcely in a better condition than *Hounslow-beath*; Mr. *Locke* has said that a kingdom grows rich as a farm, it may be said with equal propriety, that a kingdom is improved almost in the same manner. The occupiers of waste lands make inclosures their first step towards improvement, I have practised this method with great profit,

profit, and fatted bullocks where sheep have starved, however I should be very diffident of arguing from my own experience, because it has not been long enough to enable me to speak with the certainty that questions of this kind require; Mr. *Young* says, that sheep are four times more profitable in inclosures than open grounds, from hence then it seems pretty clear, that inclosing is an improvement worth at least about ten shillings an acre, which upon the entire kingdom, allowing one million of acres for rivers, cities, &c. would amount to five millions a year, a prodigious addition to the rental of this kingdom. Surely this is an object that immediately concerns the landed interest of this country, and which I am sure it is their interest to promote with more than ordinary celerity, nor is the expence of such an undertaking very considerable in this country where labour is so very cheap, it cannot rise to much more than half a years purchase, the expence of inclosing the entire kingdom with quickset hedges, would just amount to £3,142,188, * exclusive of gates which might

* THE expence of any undertaking, private or public, is an object of the greatest consequence, it should ever be uppermost in the breasts those that form any designs of any extent, but it is the misfortune of poor countries, that profits upon every undertaking are generally higher than in places where great trade creates habits of œconomy, and quick returns enable persons to take less profits: water-carriage has of late been an object of national attention, whether the great benefit that should be expected from it may be attained, whilst the toll is left at the rate of two pence a hundred for every ten miles, may deserve consideration. Land-carriage is ten times as dear as water-carriage, and notwithstanding the rate allowed by parliament is more than one half of the present price of our miserable and expensive land-carriage, or in other words, as dear as land carriage, for this article is capable of just that improvement.

might come to £250 000, viz. £10 for every four hundred acres, now one third of this expence may be spared, it being probable that one third of the kingdom is already hedged or inclosed, or in such a condition, that a little more than two millions would complete this great object; I have now done with the subject which I proposed to lay before your Excellency, I have exposed with the fairness which ever attends disinterestedness, the condition of this country which feels itself so happy under your Excellency's administration; should the measures which I have suggested deserve your Excellency's approbation, I shall, I trust, have the good fortune to see them carried into execution, by that zeal for the public service, which characterizes an excellent chief governor and a good man. I have the honour to be with the most profound respect,

Your Excellency's

most obedient

and most humble servant,

A Lover of his Country.

F I N I S.

